

Applicant : Scott Montgomery
Appl. No. : 09/990,605
Examiner : Mamon Obeid
Docket No. : 703602.6

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1.-156. (canceled)

157. (previously presented) A postage indicia generation system for implementation with a postal system, comprising:

a vendor controlled centralized postage-issuing computer system accessible to a plurality of end user computers, configured to generate a unique postage indicium upon request by the end user computer;

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to communicate with a centralized master tracking computer system and to receive a unique tracking identification string generated by the centralized master tracking computer system for application to a mail piece such that the tracking identification string is readable independent of the indicium,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to associate the tracking identification string with the unique postage indicium, store the association in a database and transmit both the unique tracking identification string and the unique postage indicium to the end user computer,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to enable a postal authority to verify postage on the mail piece by transmittal of the tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system and the centralized postage-issuing computer is configured to, upon receipt of the tracking identification string from the postal authority, retrieve the unique postage indicium from the database and transmit data corresponding to the unique postage indicium to the postal authority.

158. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 157, wherein the unique tracking identification string on the mail piece is represented as a one-

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Appl. No.	:	09/990,605
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Docket No.	:	703602.6

dimensional barcode, and wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to enable the postal authority to request the unique postage indicium by submission of data derived from the one-dimensional barcode.

159. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 157, wherein the unique postage indicium is associated with a digital signature not applied to the mail piece.

160. (previously presented) A postage indicia generation system for implementation with a postal system, comprising:

a vendor controlled centralized postage-issuing computer system accessible to a plurality of end user computers, configured to generate a unique postage indicium upon request by the end user computer;

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to communicate with a centralized master tracking computer system and to receive a unique tracking identification string generated by the master tracking computer system for application to a mail piece such that the tracking identification string is readable independent of the indicium,

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to associate the tracking identification string with the unique postage indicium, store the association in a database and transmit both the unique tracking identification string and the unique postage indicium to the end user computer,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to enable a postal authority to verify postage on the mail piece by transmittal of the tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system and the centralized postage-issuing computer is configured to retrieve and validate the unique postage indicium using a public key, and send an indication of whether the unique postage indicium is valid to the postal authority.

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Docket No.	:	703602.6

161. (currently amended) The postage indicia generation system of claim 160, wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer is configured to, upon validation of the unique postage indicium, send the unique postage indicium to the postal authority for further validation.

162. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 157, wherein the centralized master tracking computer system is operated by the postal authority.

163. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 162, wherein the unique tracking identification string on the mail piece is represented as a one-dimensional barcode, and wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to enable the postal authority to request the unique postage indicium by submission of data derived from the one-dimensional barcode.

164. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 163, wherein the unique postage indicium is associated with a digital signature not applied to the mail piece.

165. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 160, wherein the centralized master tracking computer system is operated by the postal authority.

166. (previously presented new) The postage indicia generation system of claim 165, wherein the unique tracking identification string on the mail piece is represented as a one-dimensional barcode, and wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is configured to enable the postal authority to request the unique postage indicium by submission of data derived from the one-dimensional barcode.

167. (previously presented) The postage indicia generation system of claim 166, wherein the unique postage indicium is associated with a digital signature not applied to the mail piece.